

Erythrina variegata var. orientalis: Coral Tree¹

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Introduction

This fast-growing, 50 feet tall and wide deciduous tree with green and yellow-variegated, six-inch-long leaves creates a broad canopy but has spiny branches. In spring, before the leaves appear, Coral Tree is decorated with showy red blossoms, each flower 2.5 inches long and arranged in dense, six-inch-long racemes. These blooms are followed by 12-inch-long, red/brown seedpods which contain poisonous seeds.

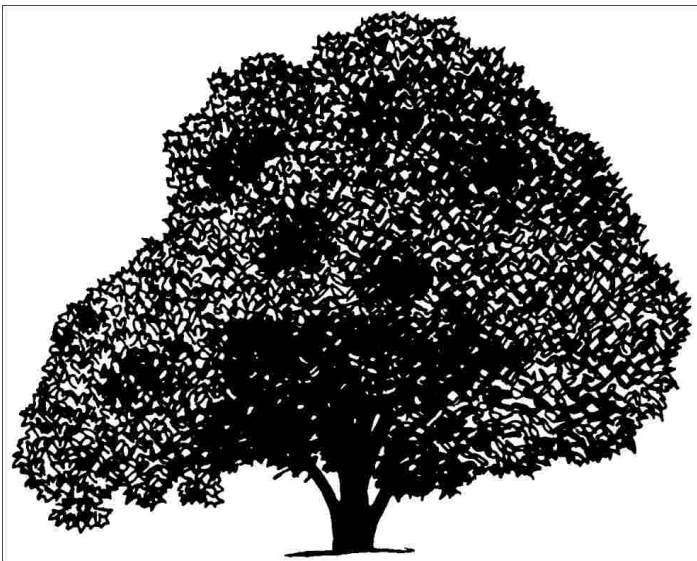


Figure 1. Mature *Erythrina variegata var. orientalis*: Coral Tree

General Information

Scientific name: *Erythrina variegata var. orientalis*

Pronunciation: air-rith-RYE-nuh vair-ee-eh-GAY-tuh
variety or-ee-en-TAY-liss

Common name(s): Coral Tree

Family: *Leguminosae*

USDA hardiness zones: 10A through 11 (Fig. 2)

Origin: not native to North America

Invasive potential: little invasive potential

Uses: shade; specimen

Availability: somewhat available, may have to go out of the region to find the tree



Figure 2. Range

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Description

Height: 50 to 60 feet

Spread: 40 to 50 feet

Crown uniformity: symmetrical

Crown shape: round, vase

Crown density: dense

Growth rate: fast

Texture: coarse

Foliage

Leaf arrangement: alternate (Fig. 3)

Leaf type: trifoliate, odd-pinnately compound

Leaf margin: entire

Leaf shape: deltoid, ovate

Leaf venation: pinnate, reticulate

Leaf type and persistence: deciduous

Leaf blade length: 2 to 4 inches

Leaf color: green

Fall color: no color change

Fall characteristic: not showy

Flower

Flower color: red

Flower characteristics: showy

Fruit

Fruit shape: unknown

Fruit length: unknown

Fruit covering: dry or hard

Fruit color: brown

Fruit characteristics: does not attract wildlife; not showy; fruit/leaves not a litter problem

Trunk and Branches

Trunk/bark/branches: branches don't droop; showy; typically multi-trunked; no thorns

Pruning requirement: needed for strong structure

Breakage: resistant

Current year twig color: gray, brown

Current year twig thickness: very thick, thick

Wood specific gravity: unknown

Culture

Light requirement: full sun

Soil tolerances: clay; sand; loam; alkaline; acidic; well-drained

Drought tolerance: high

Aerosol salt tolerance: moderate

Other

Roots: can form large surface roots

Winter interest: yes

Outstanding tree: yes

Ozone sensitivity: unknown

Verticillium wilt susceptibility: unknown

Pest resistance: sensitive to pests/diseases

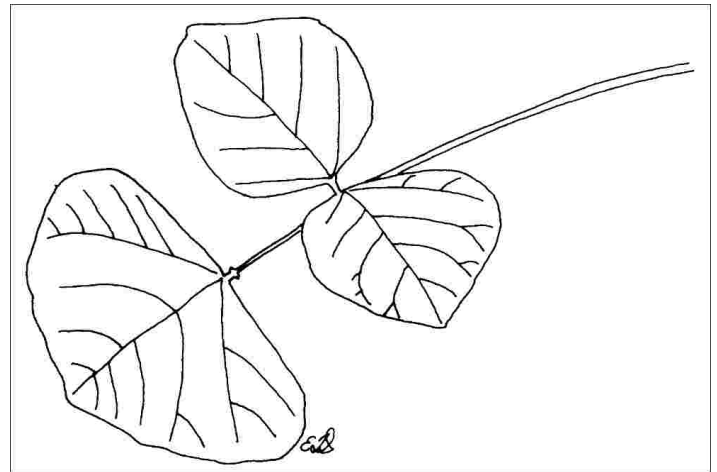


Figure 3. Foliage

Use and Management

The large size of Coral Tree makes it suited for planting in parks, golf courses and in other large-scale landscapes. Multiple trunks ascend from the lower portion of the main trunk giving rise to a wide-spreading canopy casting dense shade. Lower branches droop to the ground if they are allowed to remain on the tree. Give this tree plenty of room to develop since the canopy is large and the tree looks wonderful with a symmetrical crown. Since the trunk often flares or buttresses at the base, plant it at least 10 feet from a sidewalk or driveway.

Coral Tree should be grown in full sun on well-drained soil. Trees are highly drought-tolerant and moderately salt-tolerant.

Propagation is easily done by seeds, cuttings, or division.

Pests

Borers may infest weakened trees.

Diseases

No diseases are of major concern. Caterpillars can eat significant amounts of foliage.